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paste

SIGNS *of* LIFE IN MUSIC, FILM & CULTURE NOVEMBER 08

HEIR OF BOWIE

Kevin Barnes thrusts Of Montreal into the spotlight

CHARLIE KAUFMAN

Eternal Sunshine screenwriter takes us inside his directorial debut

CATE BLANCHETT AS GEORGE WASHINGTON? JON STEWART AS JAMES MONROE? (P. 17)

\+ 300 YEARS OF SACRED HARP, *KIND OF BLUE* TURNS 50 AND A BABY IN A BOB MARLEY WIG

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ISSUE 48

SAGE CATTABRIGA-ALOSA 3/12

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The Verve

Channeling the extraordinary chemistry between all four original members and the explosive energy from the band's live performances, the Verve creates large soundscapes with soulful lyrics on the new studio album *Forth*.

Keaton Simons

"Keaton Simons writes compelling songs, sings with a distinctive, soulful voice and plays guitar with skill and ferocity. He sounds like a polished pro, not a raw newcomer, with enough sound and charisma to fill an arena." (*LA Times*)

Amie Miriello

This young but seasoned performer has developed a love for writing, calling it her "favorite part of the whole thing." Amie presents her passion for expressing herself through the strength of her seasoned-sounding debut.

Justin Nozuka

Blending elements of neo-soul, folk, old-times blues and pop, Justin Nozuka has the guts of Ray LaMontagne and the soul of Lauryn Hill. His critically acclaimed debut *Holly* features the hit song "After Tonight."

John Hiatt

Same Old Man marks the first album from John Hiatt in more than three years. The *Washington Post* noted that his scratchy voice evokes a genuinely touching blend of both weariness and tenderness. A deluxe CD/DVD version includes six rare, newly available performances of classic songs spanning different eras of Hiatt's thirty year musical career.

We Started Nothing is a debut album brimming with intuitive pop noise. It's pure garage-pop that will in-bed itself into your subconscious. Snappy choruses trade off against angular guitar work, whip smart drumming and a succession of loops that are created live with the use of delay pedals.

The Ting Tings

Albert Hammond, Jr.

Albert Hammond, Jr. returns with a new album, *¿Como Te Llama?*. With stellar reviews (3 stars in *Rolling Stone*), *¿Como Te Llama?* is perhaps the boldest, most eclectic and ambitious record of Albert's career.

Blame It On Gravity is the seventh studio album and the first new album in four years from alt-country pioneers Old 97's. The album finds the band "turning up the amps and returning to the satisfying crunch" with a mix of rock, punk, pop and classic country that defined the band's sound on earlier albums.

Old 97's

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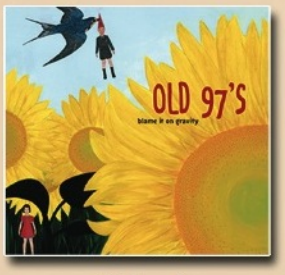


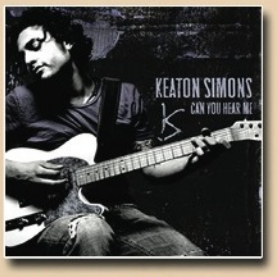
Old 97's
Blame It On Gravity

John Hiatt
Same Old Man

Justin Nozuka
Holly

The Verve
Forth

Albert Hammond, Jr.
¿Cómo Te Llama?



Keaton Simons
Can You Hear Me

The Ting Tings
We Started Nothing

Amie Miriello
I Came Around

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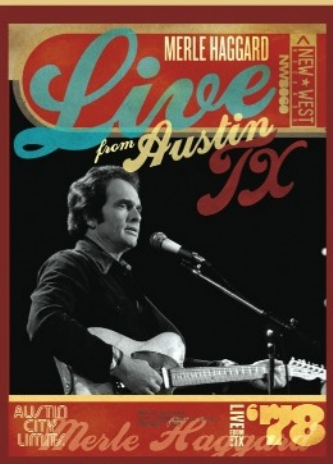
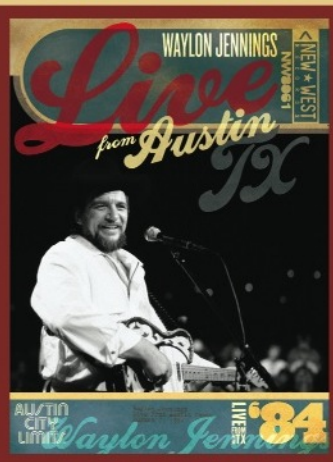


MERLE HAGGARD

Merle Haggard's very first Austin City Limits performance,

Features
Farmer's Daughter & Workin' Man's Blues



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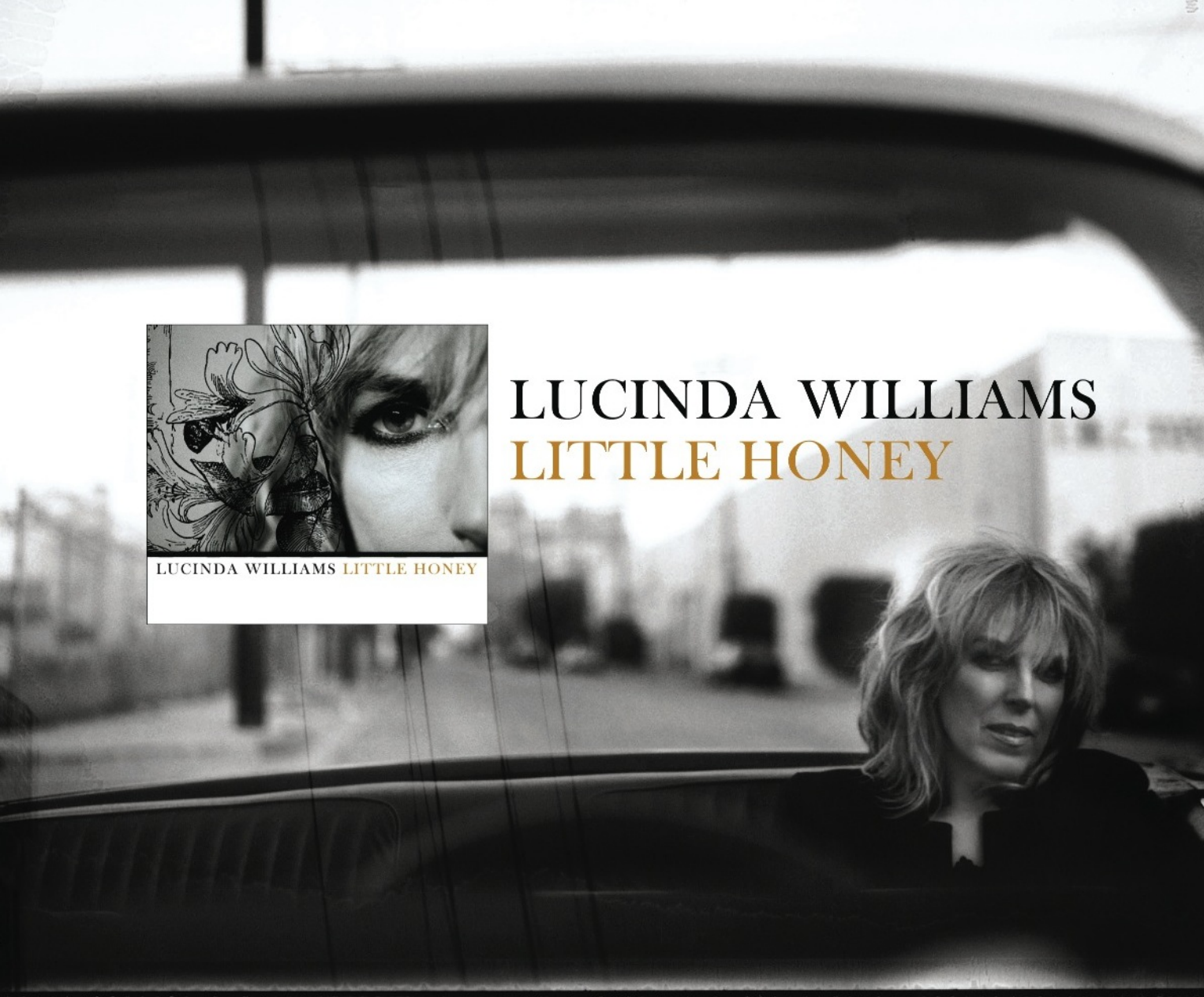

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COLD LAMPIN' WITH OF MONTREAL

After toiling in relative obscurity for the better part of the last decade, Kevin Barnes' constantly mutating indie-pop project Of Montreal has garnered critical adoration for its compulsive creativity, freaky weirdness and ultra-catchy pop goodness. On new album *Skeletal Lamping*, Barnes navigates a choppy sea of sexuality while shining a spotlight on the strange beasts and angels lurking just beneath his soul's surface.

BY STEVE LABATE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEREMY COWART

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CHARLIE KAUFMAN ADAPTS

Nobody does it meta like Charlie Kaufman. The reclusive screenwriter behind such whirling psych-out comedies as *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* and *Being John Malkovich* talks about the geometrical complexities and gut emotions of his directorial debut, *Synecdoche, New York*. BY STEVE DOLLAR
ILLUSTRATION BY OLAF HAJEK

SHOUT AND SING THE GOOD OLD WAY

Sacred Harp music, a form of shape-note singing, has gone largely unnoticed for centuries outside of the rural South. Today, a capella singers across the country are fighting to preserve one of America's first musical traditions. BY KATE KIEFER

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Cover photo by Jeremy Cowart

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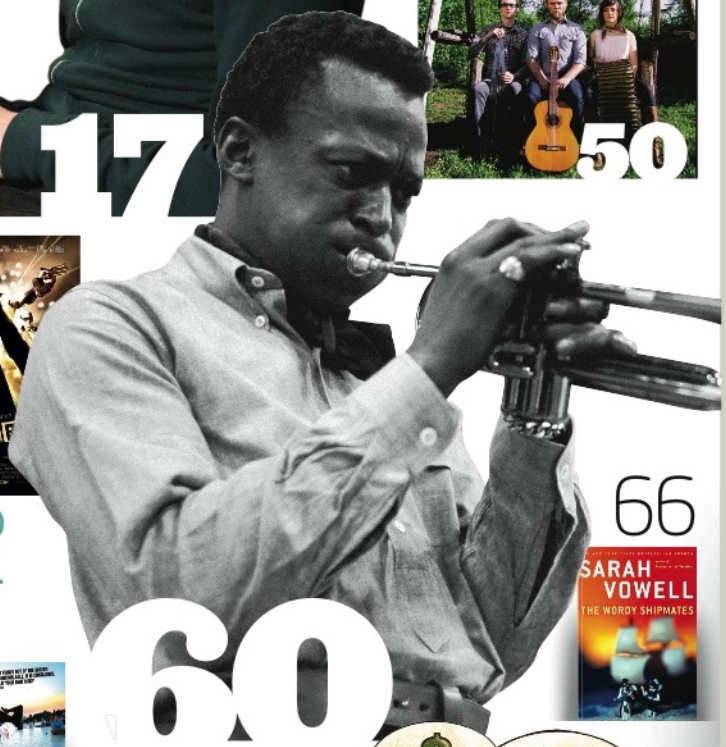

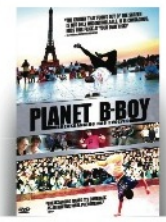

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The Space Between

You may be 35,000 feet away from the ground,

but great music is as near as your armrest. Thanks to **The Paste Beat**—a partnership between PASTE and American Airlines—you can enjoy PASTE-approved tunes till the wheels touch down. Or you can always listen to that one channel that plays Enya and the sound of a stream rippling over silky-smooth boulders. Actually, forget about those boulders. Let us bring the rock (and every other genre you love).

Featured Tracks From *Paste*

THE SPRING STANDARDS
Goodbye Midnight (Live at Paste)

GIANT SAND
Without A Word

THE BITTERSWEETS
Wreck

BLITZEN TRAPPER
Furr

SLOW RUNNER
Varsity Drag (Live at Paste)

THE ROSEBUDS
Life Like

WILLIAM FITZSIMMONS
Everything Has Changed (Live at Paste)

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BLOGS

Daily reviews and photos from the Monolith Festival and the CMJ Music Marathon & Film Festival. **Alejandro Escovedo's trip to the Democratic National Convention on Dear Diary.** Live photos of Sigur Rós, TV on the Radio, Jenny Lewis and more on 1,000 Words. **Plus, the best in homegrown music, film and culture on Paste:Local.**

Jimmy Carter and Alejandro Escovedo

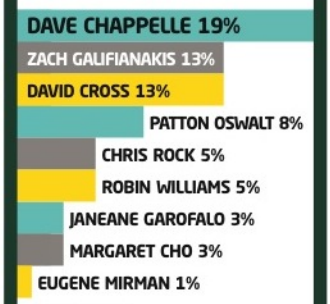
MEDIA

The Submarines

Exclusive album streams on the Paste Station. **Live performances from Wild Sweet Orange, The Submarines, Matthew Perryman Jones and others.** Fresh editions of the Paste Culture Club and PasteVision podcasts. **Plus, music videos from Carla Bruni, Hotel Lights, Joseph Arthur and more.**

POLL

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE MODERN-DAY HUMORIST?



DROP BY EACH WEEK TO CAST YOUR VOTE.

Starting 11/3: What's your favorite presidential film?

PLUS: FILM AND MUSIC REVIEWS, INTERVIEWS AND MORE

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"They were the very essence of rock 'n' roll and, many would argue, the last great American band of the genre."

—Bill Holdship, from new liner notes for *Don't Tell A Soul*

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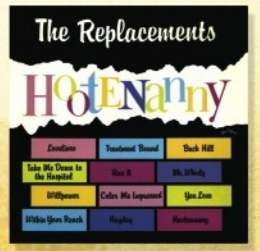

STINK, SORRY MA, HOOTENANNY, *and* **LET IT BE**

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EDITORIAL

BY JOSH JACKSON

THE SEARCH

I think I may have a problem. When I got to the office this morning, the first thing I did was turn on I'm from Barcelona's "Paper Planes," and turn it up loud. And when it was finished, I played it again. Last night I fell asleep reading *Thirteen Moons*, Charles Frazier's latest. And I'm starting to get hooked on two new TV shows, *Fringe* and *True Blood*, to add to an already crowded fall lineup of shows that automatically get recorded to my DVR. With nearly every CD released coming through my office, most every film I want to see already in my Netflix queue and more magazine subscriptions than would be humanly possible to read, I'm never at a loss for some form of entertainment to fill the gaps in life. Even when I'm standing in line at the bank, I've got a phone in my pocket with access to free games, YouTube videos and the rest of that wonderful composite of all the knowledge of recorded human history: the Internet. I'm in danger of, as Neil Postman put it, amusing myself to death.

It's been 47 years and billions of entertainment options since that great "malaise" Binx Bolling, in Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*, found more meaning and purpose in his trips to the cinema than in his own life. To counter that, he became enamored with the search—"To become aware of the possibility of the search is to be onto something. Not to be onto something is to be in despair." I like to think I'm on that search, and I find that books like *The Moviegoer*, as well as music, film, magazines—and even TV and video games—can illuminate the path ahead. But only if I'm vigilant about actually living, and separating the wheat from the chaff when I do stop to enjoy a piece of our culture.

Nothing is worse than watching a movie (like say *10,000 B.C.*—damn you with your enticing CGI saber-toothed tiger) and then wishing I had those two hours of my life back. I could've put them toward attending my first Sacred Harp singin' (p. 44) or reading the new Roy Blount Jr. book (p. 68) or listening to the new Lucinda Williams record (p. 50) or checking out a Deerhunter show (p. 53)—or, you know, actually contributing to humanity.

At *Paste*, we see it as our job to help you discover entertainment options pertinent to your search—not to serve as a replacement for your own story. I believe we were put on this earth to help redeem it. The best music, film and culture will do you no good if you're buried under it. Become a wise consumer of culture. Or better yet, become a creator of it.

Paste

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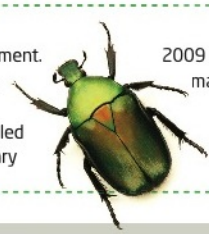
We all want to do our part to preserve the environment. A recent survey of *Paste* subscribers revealed that ***68% of you would prefer*** to take your monthly *Paste* Sampler as a secure download. So we're thrilled to announce this option beginning with our February 2009 issue. Additionally, if you would prefer to receive the magazine itself in digital form–you can do that, too.



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RYAN ADAMS & THE CARDINALS

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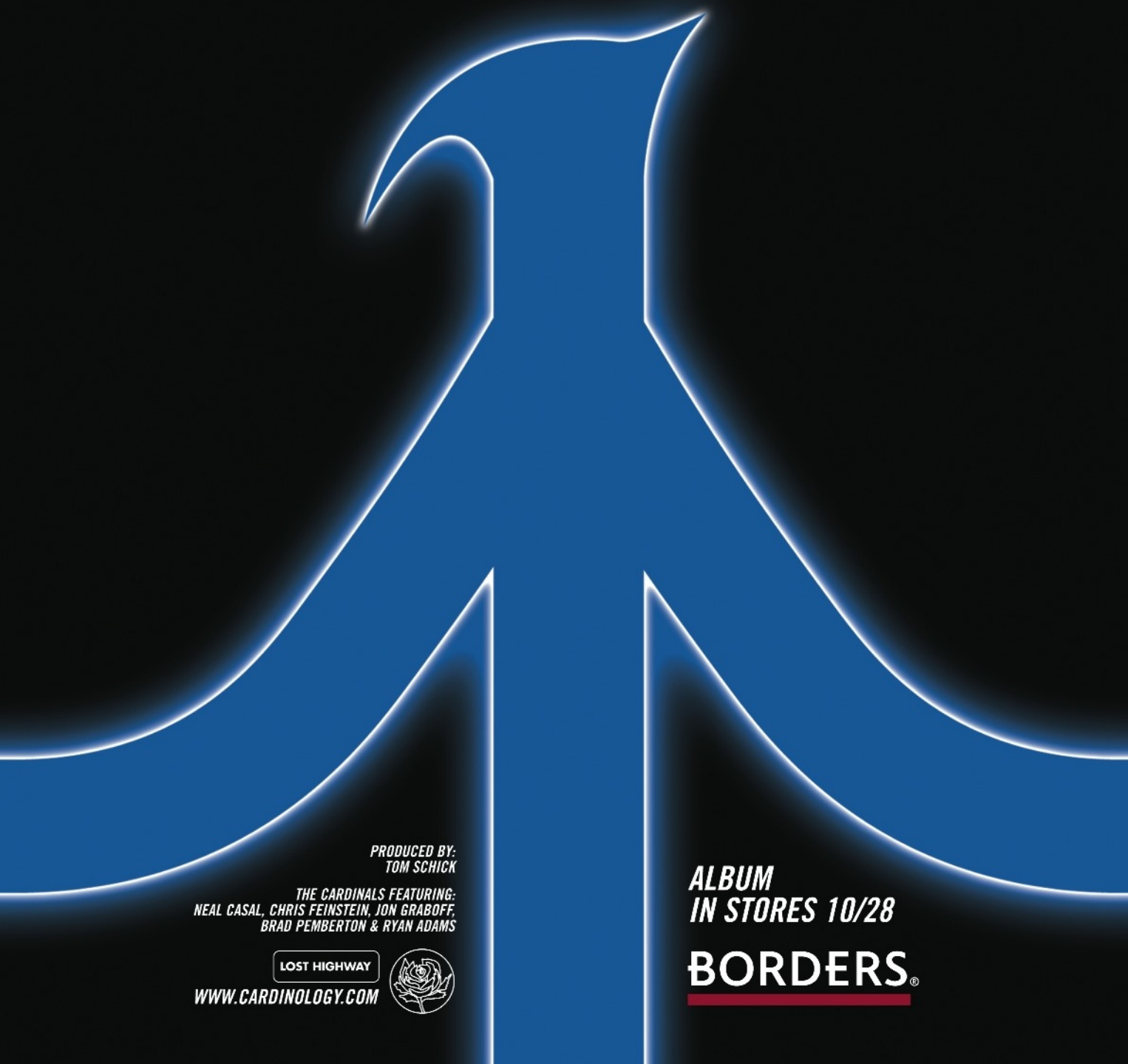

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INBOX

WE'RE BEER-Y, BEER-Y SORRY

In our profile of Wisconsin native Bon Iver, we mistakenly identified Chippewa Falls-brewed beer Leinenkugel's (the logo of which appeared on Justin Vernon's shirt) as "some Colorado brewery," and for that we sincerely apologize. We take beer very seriously here at Paste, *and so do our Leinenkugel's-swilling readers. Here's a geographical chart of where the e-lashing originated.* **Wisconsin: 8 Minnesota: 3 Illinois: 1**

JANELLE IS INDEED THE BEST

A week after discovering Janelle Monáe in Issue #46, I was able to catch her at a local venue. Her joyful, quirky romps on stage are—just like Tim Regan-Porter said—exciting to see. A group of girls who had traveled several hours from another state tried watching the show from the street through a glass door next to the stage because they couldn't get into the 21-and-over club. They were elated and astonished when Janelle ran off the stage at the end of her set, slammed her small frame against the door and fumbled with the lock in order to burst out onto the sidewalk and give them all hugs. I'm excited to see what this great performer comes up with next. Thanks for introducing me to her. **ERICA FLOCK** } Herndon, Va. {

THE RATINGS GAME

Thanks for bringing back the new and improved ratings! That's *great* customer service! **MARC DESIDERIO** } Middletown, N.J. {

I never gave much thought to the ratings systems that come with music reviews—not when I was a kid sneaking into my uncle's den to read *Rolling Stone*, not when I subscribed to *Paste* years ago. To me, they are just another distraction. It seems that your new look is attracting a new breed of indie hipster—what else could describe the mountains of letters you guys received demanding ratings be reinstated? These people want to have the most "about to break" bands on their iPhones, but don't want to do the legwork it takes to discover them. Not only are they not going to shows and getting there early to check out opening bands and buy their CDs; they can't even bother reading the well-crafted review that your clearly talented writers have shared with us. I would advise these lazy hipsters to hang up their iPhone, unplug the DSL, put the kids to bed and *read the magazine*. Maybe then they could claim to have taste in music, and not just to have downloaded yours.
BO HALL } Lake City, Fla. {

NEIL YOUNG RAINN WILSON
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MORE THAN 25 UP-AND COMING ARTISTS YOU IGNORE AT YOUR PERIL!
THE BRIDGES, JAMIE LIDELL, JANELLE MONÁE, & BON IVER
ZACH GALIFIANAKIS: Funnier Than His Own Summary

IT'S THE PRINCIPAL OF THE MATTER

C'mon, *Paste*! You're better than that; you guys are indie. *Two* John Hughes films?! ("Our Favorite High School Principals," Paste #46) What about Principal Walt Hendricks (played by Phil Reeves) in Alexander Payne's *Election*? "Hey! If you can't be adults and give these candidates the courtesy they deserve, then you don't deserve to be called adults, but children, because that's what children are

and you'll be treated like children." That's gold! Gold, I tell ya!
JOSHUA JASHINSKI { via email }

PARENTING TIPS FROM PANDA'S MOM?

The Wii rock-star segment was clever, but I have trouble taking parenting tips from a woman who has named her child "Panda" (Kimya Dawson, "Nature Mother," Paste #46). Unless Panda starts using a nickname, she is due for years of torment. Lesson #1 in any parenting guide is "do *not* name a child something ridiculous, or that rhymes with a body part/function." Just wanted to weigh in as a parent and pediatrician.
PETER SHAW { Pittsburgh, Pa. }

NO-SPIN ZONE

I'm old enough to know that most of the cool people in the arts are pretty far to the left. (I have theories, but I won't bore you.) I'm sure this includes you guys, but I'm not feeling bombarded by any hardcore political agenda when I read your magazine, and it's so refreshing to not be subjected to that stuff. Please keep up the good work!
TODD THURMAN { via email }

ED—We're pretty passionate about politics in the office, but we figure no one is looking to our entertainment magazine for their political discourse. Thanks for noticing.

NO DEPRESSION

I wanted to express my gratitude to *Paste* for getting together with *No Depression* and honoring my existing subscription. These days, it's reassuring when two businesses can get together and work out something to please the customer. I'm enjoying *Paste*. **DON KLEIN** { St. Louis Park, Minn. }

ED—We're glad to have you. And No Depression *is back this fall with a new bookazine from University of Texas Press.*

Paste

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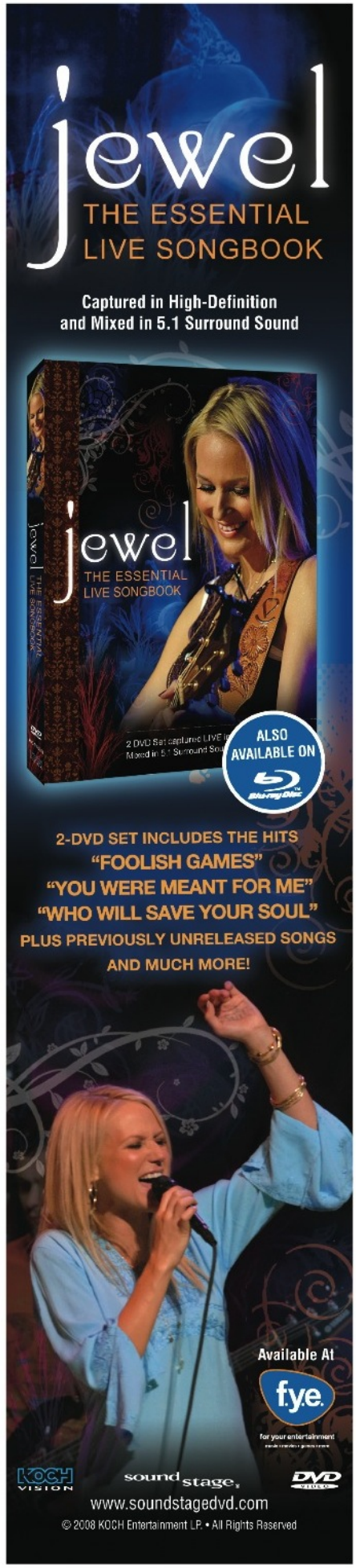

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LOU REED REVISITS *BERLIN*

In Lou Reed's New York, the people worth knowing—the ones with nobility—are jazz arrangers, maverick saxophonists, conceptual artists. Characters. These days, that's pretty much who to mention if you don't want the 66-year-old songwriter to hang up. Topics politely suggested as verboten by his publicist: his personal life, the '60s, bisexuality.

Reed is notoriously bitchy, even when promoting his newest work. In this case, it's Julian Schnabel's documentary on the 2006 revival of Reed's 1973 concept album *Berlin*, which employed the Wall as a metaphor for the corrupted heart; used lush arrangements for songs about drugs, abuse and prostitution; and was so mercilessly destroyed by the rock press upon its release that Reed refused to speak about it for years.

Today, though, Reed gushes about his collaborators. "Gorgeous," he says of Schnabel's work, which features montages filmed by the director's daughter, Lola Schnabel.

And of longtime collaborator Hal Willner, who co-produced the *Berlin* revival, a delighted Reed says, "He's a music *fool*—add this! Add that! Have you heard this? Have you heard that? Listen to this horn player! Listen to this cellist!" Wilner and Reed co-host New York Shuffle, a Sirius radio show, trying, in Reed's words, to bring back "real radio programs by people who really love music." Playlists have included Alice Coltrane, Patsy Cline and Animal Collective.

Then there's John Zorn, the veteran downtown saxophonist whom Reed has joined in the past year for improvised duos, trios and quartets, and on occasion welcomed into his own band. "I think he's one of the great, great saxophonists, besides being an astonishing person," Reed says.

The two make sense as artistic soulmates considering Zorn once released an album affixed with a warning about "high frequency extremes at the limits of human hearing & beyond, which may cause nausea, headaches & ringing in the ears," and Reed was responsible for the infamous *Metal Machine Music*. Along with *Berlin*, *Metal Machine* is often blamed for bringing Reed's career to a screeching halt in the mid '70s.

Ironically, both records have been given second chances and are now considered canonical centerpieces, pure distillations of Reed's interests in noise and storytelling. In 2002, Reed joined Zeitkratzer, a German ensemble, for a live arrangement of Reed's *Metal Machine* feedback walls. And then there's *Berlin*, a somber concept album of intimate gloom, waiting to be heard again—or, perhaps, for the first time. **JESSE JARNOW**

Self-portrait by Lou Reed

★ PRETENDERS IN CHIEF

When we learned Josh Brolin would be playing George W. Bush in Oliver Stone's new film, *W.*, we were inspired to cast actors to portray some other American presidents. The rest, as they say, is history. **ILLUSTRATIONS BY ERIC STURDEVANT**

George Washington ★ CATE BLANCHETT
The strange androgyny, the regal presence, the translucent skin—it's as if they were separated at birth!

RUG RATS: TYKES IN TOUPEES

For infants who can't yet strum a guitar, but whose first mumbled words sound eerily similar to Dylan lyrics, website BabyToupee.com has the perfect accessorry: tiny hairpieces, including Lil' Kim's cascading pink locks and Bob Marley's Rastafarian cap atop thick, luxurious dreads. Aspiring actors and corporate raiders can also don wigs inspired by Samuel L. Jackson and Donald Trump (all $21.99). Ten percent of each purchase supports children's charities like Locks of Love and The Storyteller Children's Center, and 100 percent of each purchase will provide photographic fodder to mortify your child for years to come. **CHRISTINA HANSEN**

Photo by Chris Martin

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS FRIENDS: VIC CHESNUTT CONTINUES HIS COLLABORATIVE STREAK

Many songwriters expose their heart and soul, but Vic Chesnutt hoists up his spleen, too, venting gnarly proclamations, wry observations, throwaway potty-mouth jokes and Southern Gothic vignettes. And, sometimes, the dude needs help. The versatile, prolific Athens, Ga., songwriter's 12th studio album, *Dark Developments*, is his latest in a long line of collaborative highs and lows. Here's a breakdown. **CHRIS HASSIOTIS**

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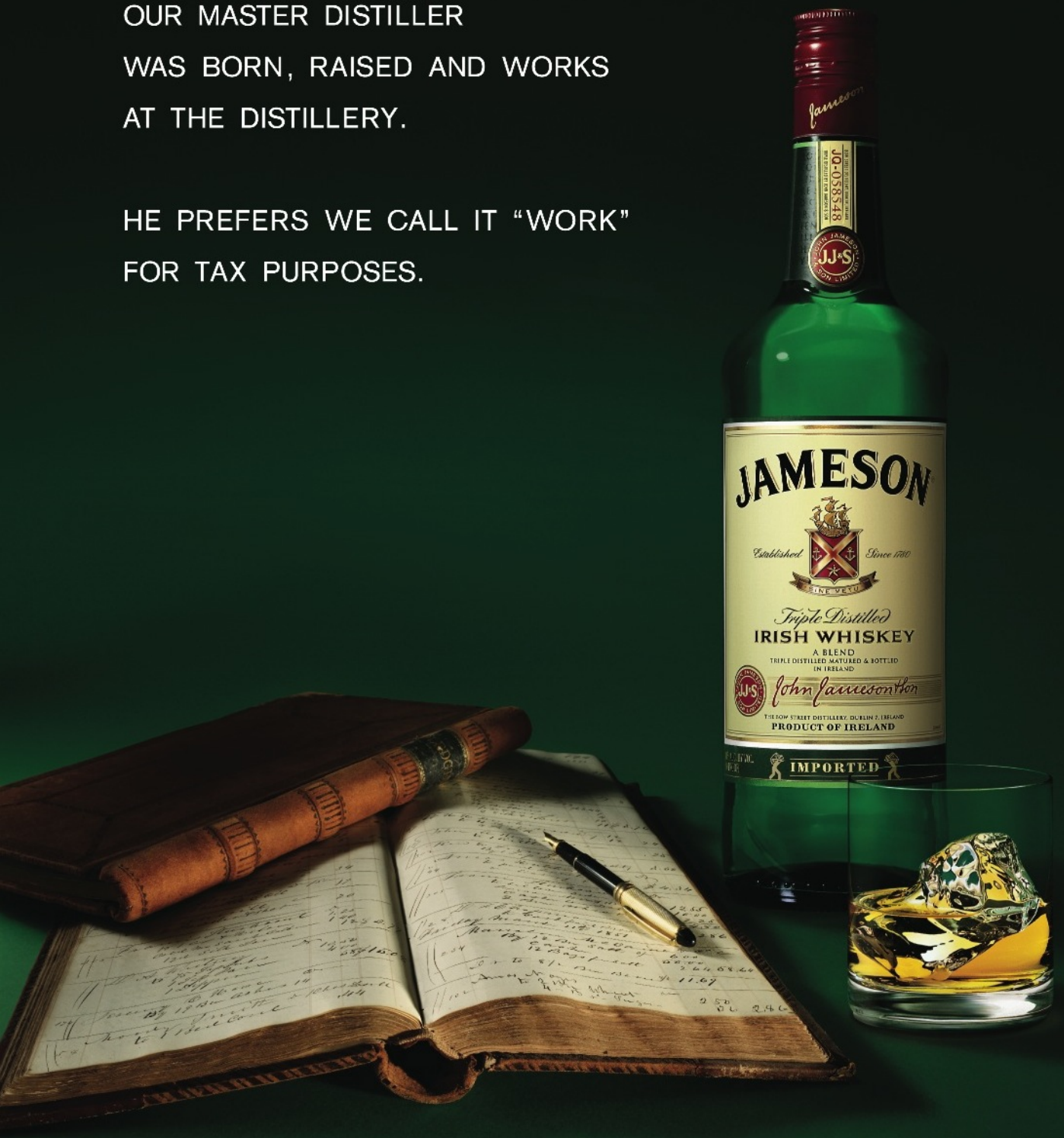

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Photo by K.C. Bailey

HE WAS A SIXTH-GRADE ALIEN

A Q&A WITH MICHAEL CERA

The most surprising thing about meeting Michael Cera isn't that he's so skinny or that he seems so young. (Now 20 years old, Cera looks like he could play teenagers awhile longer.) It's that he's every bit as down-to-earth as his characters. *Paste* caught up with the Canadian-born actor in Toronto for the premiere of his new film, *Nick and Norah's Infinite Playlist*. **ROBERT DAVIS**

PASTE: *FROM* ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT *TO* SUPERBAD *TO* JUNO *AND NOW* NICK AND NORAH, *YOUR ROLES ARE GETTING PROGRESSIVELY LARGER. IS THAT A CONSCIOUS DECISION?*

MICHAEL CERA: No, it's just whatever comes around. It's just like a gut [feeling]. If you read something and the people feel right—you know, it's important to click, because sometimes you could really love people but it just doesn't feel right, and you're together every day for a long time. I really had a good feeling about this, and I met with Peter [Sollett, the director], and really liked him and wanted to do it and was allowed to.

P: *HAD YOU SEEN HIS FILM* RAISING VICTOR VARGAS*?*

MC: Yeah, I loved that movie and was a big fan of his, and I was really excited to work with him. And I rehearsed with Pete and Kat [Dennings, who plays Norah], just to get comfortable with each other. She and I had a lot of scenes, so it was helpful that we could talk to each other. We hung out a bit. And I read the book, and we went over the script. It was pretty simple.

P: *YOU'VE BEEN ACTING FOR A LONG TIME NOW. WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST ROLE?*

MC: I did a commercial when I was nine. But my first real part was—well, I did this Robert Greenwald movie *Steal This Movie!* But then I was in a children's show here in Canada called *I Was a Sixth Grade Alien* that ran for two seasons. But before that I went on a lot of commercial auditions and never got them, which is really disheartening.

P: *PEOPLE CHANGE A LOT BETWEEN THE AGES OF NINE AND 20. IS THIS BUSINESS SOMETHING YOU WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN FOR A LONG TIME?*

MC: I think so. There's pros and cons, I guess. I'm overwhelmed by being recognized. Not that it happens [often], but when it does happen, I don't know. I get really tense. It's strange, you know? That's something that's making me consider whether I can do this forever, so I don't know. But I love acting and I love working. I love being on set and working with people. You meet a lot of cool people, really talented people. And that's fun.

P: *THE CHARACTERS YOU PLAY OFTEN SEEM VERY REALISTIC EVEN WHEN THEY'RE SURROUNDED BY ABSURDITY.*

MC: Yeah, I guess so. In *Nick and Norah*, nothing really dramatic happens, I mean, not to give away the non-twist, but it's more grounded. It's a pretty grounded movie, and it feels authentic, but I think it's still funny and, you know, not too serious.

P: *OK, WE HAVE TO CONFIRM OR DISPEL A RUMOR. DO YOU KNOW IF THERE ARE PLANS FOR A SEQUEL TO THE* ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT *MOVIE?*

MC: Oh, is there one already? [laughs] People always ask about a movie, but actually I don't know any more than anyone else does.

James Monroe ★ JON STEWART
If Stewart—a fellow William & Mary grad—were elected, America would enter a second Era of Good Feelings.

MIXED media WHO DRINKS WHILE BATHING?

the PASTE 7 OUR FAVORITE ENTERTAINING BITS OF WHATEVER

1. **Mark DiCristina, Production Coordinator → The "Blog" of "Unnecessary" Quotation Marks** This "blog" is entirely dedicated to finding and exposing my favorite punctuation blunder. QUOTATION-MARKS.BLOGSPOT.COM

2. **Austin L. Ray, Web Editor → Dale's Pale Ale** Contrary to popular brew-snob belief, good beer *does* come in a can. Dale's is hoppy and delicious. I drink it for breakfast, in the shower and while at work. In fact, I just spilled it all over my keyboard. OSKARBLUES.COM

3. **Kate Kiefer, Associate Editor → "Keep Calm and Carry On" posters** George VI created this slogan as propaganda to keep people from flipping out during wartime. These silk-screened reproductions make great gifts for stressed-out friends. SFGIRLBYBAY.ETSY.COM

4. **Steve Thorson, Web Developer → The Settlers of Catan** The gateway drug to all of the extraordinary board games Germany's been cranking out for the past few decades. CATANONLINE.COM

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6. **Rachael Maddux, Assistant Editor → Kashi Strawberry Fields** With its crunchy flakes and tangy freeze-dried berries, this stuff is great with milk, a bit of yogurt or straight out of the box in greedy, organic-lovin' handfuls. I'd expect nothing less from a cereal named after a Beatles song. KASHI.COM

7. **Jason Killingsworth, Deputy Editor → Leinad Zeraus' techno-thriller novel, *Daemon*** A filthy-rich, 220-iQ, recently deceased video game designer has left behind a computer script that threatens to tear apart civilization. Wet-yourself scary, tech-savvy, mind-blowing! THEDAEMON.COM

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When Scott Urban damaged his glasses during an ill-fated break-dancing attempt, he had a choice: purchase a new pair, or craft his own. "I thought I'd make a pair of wooden frames," he says, "because I hate shopping."

Urban, the 27-year-old founder of Urban Spectacles of Wood, a Chicago-based bespoke-eyewear purveyor, has been handmaking custom frames ever since, using such exotic materials as bicycle brake levers, ebony gabon wood, turquoise and Hawaiian curly koa.

He's transformed microbrew bottles into "beergoggles" with a smart beveled edge around the eye, like the base of a longneck. And he's developed a line of Record Specs—pieces of vinyl stacked and laminated together with a finish that shows off the grooves. "One girl searched for an album that would glow under a black light," Urban says. "Another person wanted white vinyl. And there's a hologram pair that I did."

Custom frames take about two weeks to make and start at about $550, though Urban accepts trade: "Musicians can write my name into one of their songs and I'll give them a pair," he says, laughing. "But it has to be the big guys, none of those little MySpace kids." *urbanspectacles.com*

LAURA KINIRY – Photos by Scott Urban

William Henry Harrison ★ STEVE BUSCEMI
Harrison was President for 30 days, then died of pneumonia. Hmmm... what actor looks like he's 30 days from death?

Photo by Danny Clinch

SIMPLE STARDOM

Lee Ann Womack embraces her roots

Fifteen years ago, Lee Ann Womack was handing out demos door-to-door in Nashville, baby daughter in tow. "My husband at the time was on the road. I couldn't afford a babysitter and thought, 'I'll probably never have a career now because I have to take care of this baby," she says, perched on a barstool in her kitchen. "Then I finally decided, 'I'll stop bitching about it and take the kid with me.'"

Four platinum records, two Grammys, another marriage and another daughter later, the inconvenience has paid off. Womack's 1997 self-titled debut and 2000 crossover smash "I Hope You Dance" plunged her into country-pop stardom, paving the way for her to sing the more straight-ahead country she prefers. "'I Hope You Dance' was a blessing and a curse," she says. "It's hard to get over that, and there have been strategic moves to redefine my music."

One of those moves was 2005's wistful, down-home *There's More Where That Came From*, an instant classic. Womack's new record, *Call Me Crazy*, features plenty more true-blue country (including an old-timey duet with George Strait), as well as a few poppier songs. ("The Story Of My Life," for instance, may seem like "I Hope You Dance, Part Two.") But Womack's got the story to back up the sentimentality. "I didn't come to Nashville with anything," she says. "Now I can't stand to hear people complain about how they can't pull themselves up."

Although her gated-community house in Nashville—complete with a Hummer in the driveway and a pair of Yorkies in the back yard—is no humble abode, it's free of instruments, platinum records and anything else that might signal the presence of a country queen. "It's constantly a challenge," she says, pulling muffins, baked by her assistant, from the oven. "I find it a struggle to be the star I'm supposed to be—to dress like, act like, live like a star—but then be a normal mom." Womack's 17-year-old daughter Aubrie sings harmony on *Call Me Crazy*, and both girls appear in the video for "I Hope You Dance," but they're not allowed to participate in the celebrity aspects of their mom's career. "I don't like for the girls to watch award shows when I'm on, and we don't listen to the CDs," she says. "We just don't live that way."

Womack grew up in a family where the kids had to pitch in around the house, out of necessity. While her girls are accustomed to quite a different lifestyle, they still do chores. "Lord knows everyone has to learn how to clean a bathroom," she says. "Even if it's to show their housekeeper how they want it done."

KATE KIEFER

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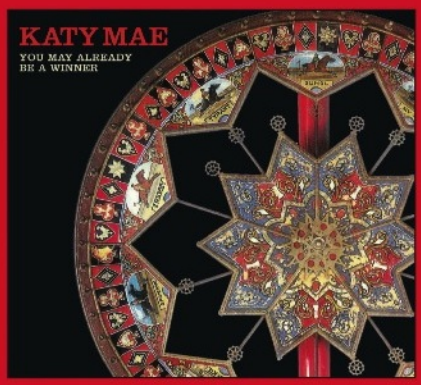

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MUSICIANS

WILD BEASTS:
BETWEEN A PURR AND A ROAR

British band Wild Beasts was originally called Fauve, a reference to a group of early-20th-century French painters (*les Fauves*) whose outrageous use of bold colors marked them as true avant-gardists. The band eventually translated its name to Wild Beasts "because it sounds so much more crude in English," says singer Hayden Thorpe. Still, the avant-garde parallels remain: Wild Beasts' debut *Limbo, Panto* is a soaring, singular combination of emotional abandon, frank laddishness, shimmering guitars and cabaret theatricality.

"I think the beauty of the music is that you can take from it what you want," says Thorpe, noting that some people tell him they work out to the Beasts' music while others say they play it when they're going to sleep. "It has enough layers in it for people to cherry-pick what they like."

He and Little were teenagers at the same school when they started the group in 2002, and they write as if they're still goose-pimpled gods, to borrow a phrase from their song "Assembly." *Limbo*'s lyrics vacillate between soul searching and defiant selfishness, a fraught contrast encapsulated in the last line of "She Purred, While I Grrred": "I want she for laundry / I want she so I'm not lonely / I want she... not matrimony."

"Something that fascinates me is that the real macho, hard elements of men and the more vulnerable, insecure sides of them don't ever get talked about because it's too uncomfortable for guys to hear about," Thorpe says.

Singing mostly in a falsetto that recalls the wrenching, otherworldly vocals of Antony Hegarty (of Antony and the Johnsons), the young singer flaunts his own vulnerability on *Limbo, Panto*, even though he sometimes gets flack for it. "It takes more balls to sing like this than it does to sing in some sort of half bearlike growl for half an hour," Thorpe maintains. "And you can get away with saying more outrageous things if you sing them in a beautiful way." **KRISTINA FELICIANO**

Wild Beasts photo by Edd Westmacott. Ando photo by Hidetoshi Aoyagi

WILD BEASTS HOMETOWN: Kendal, a town in England's Lake District **ALBUM:** *Limbo, Panto* **BAND MEMBERS [L-R]:** Tom Fleming (bass, vocals) Benny Little (lead guitar), Hayden Thorpe (lead vocals), Chris Talbot (drums, vocals) **FOR FANS OF:** Antony and the Johnsons, falsetto

GAME DEVELOPER

TAKEHIRO ANDO
GIVES MUSIC A FIGHTING CHANCE

If you need advice on how to get paid for obsessing over the things you love most in the world, you might start by consulting with Japanese videogame designer Takehiro Ando.

"I've always been a heavy-metal fan," Ando says, flashing a grin from behind the curtains of his black hair. "I created a video game that was only released in Japan called *Heavy Metal Thunder*, where robots battle to heavy-metal music. I also created a TV show, which was a variety/comedy show about heavy metal. I'm super into heavy metal."

Ando works for Square Enix, which built a massive video-game empire on the back of its bestselling role-playing franchise *Final Fantasy*, and he's come to Los Angeles to showcase his newest creation—an iPod RPG called *Song Summoner: The Unsung Heroes*—at the 2008 E3 Media & Business Summit.

The idea for the game grew out of a dilemma familiar to any iPod owner. "I have about 10,000 songs on my iPod," Ando says, "and of course you listen to some songs more than others. There are always songs that get skipped over, even on shuffle. These are essentially the 'unsung heroes' in the game's subtitle. As you're playing this game and trying out different songs for your characters, maybe you rediscover some of the songs in your iPod and you go, 'I'd forgotten about this, but it's actually really cool.'"

As the protagonist Ziggy, you set out to rescue your brother from the evil hordes of the Mechanical Militia, creating Tune Troopers to fight alongside you in your quest. Pick songs from your iPod library, and the game determines each Trooper's attributes based on your selections. The game's innovative concept adds new meaning to the phrase "playing a song." **JASON KILLINGSWORTH**

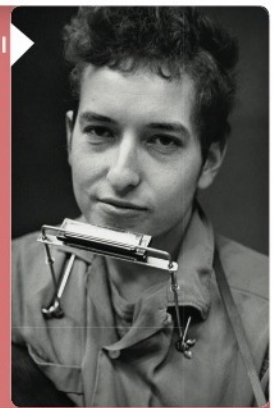
TAKEHIRO ANDO HOMETOWN: Tokyo **GAME:** *Song Summoner* **FOR FANS OF:** *Final Fantasy Tactics*, Steve Jobs

Zachary Taylor ★ ISAAC HANSON
We'll let you figure out why.

MUSICIAN

THE TALLEST MAN ON EARTH RISES ABOVE

BOB DYLAN



Toward the end of "Talkin' New York," the second track from Bob Dylan's eponymous debut, the 20-year-old folksinger probed into American lives with precocious insight: "A lot of people don't have much food on their table," he drawled, "but they got a lot of forks 'n knives, and they gotta cut somethin'." Dylan was wrought by his world. And his hunt for the right words, stories and sounds to comprehend its changes led him into all corners of creation—whimsical poetry, matter-of-fact protest tales, acoustic twang and electric echoes.

The Tallest Man On Earth, like Dylan before him, grounds his songs in Son House- and Blind Willie McTell-inspired guitar work, lofting tempestuous vocals overhead and garnishing liberally with "babe"s and "honey"s. As if simultaneously tipping his hat and thumbing his nose, Swedish singer/songwriter Kristian Matsson took inspiration for the Tallest Man moniker from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow—the 19th-century poet accused by critics of being "artificial and imitative"—even as the move mirrored Dylan's own renaming after Welsh poet Dylan Thomas. But the Tallest Man's most Dylanesque trait might be the way he rises above obvious comparisons, just as Dylan transcended his similarities to Woody Guthrie.

Instead of a politically conscious countryman twisting his homeland's traditions, Matsson is a troubadour from mystical Scandinavia, breaking into Americana from the outside. This—along with his love for Longfellow—explains why many of his songs center on the natural and the fantastical. Wind, that famous Dylan metaphor, works differently when Matsson sings, "Damn be this wind, it's still movin' on in / To the bones and the bed of my soul." And while a young Dylan went "a-thinkin' and a-wondrin', walkin' down the road" to find ways to fathom his world, Matsson escapes into shimmering fairy-tale tropes: unicorns, kerosene eyes, houses painted with water. The Tallest Man doesn't sit meekly at Dylan's feet; he stands atop his forebear's shoulders. Maybe that's why he's so tall. **HENRY FREEDLAND**

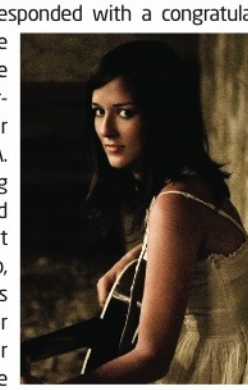
THE TALLEST MAN ON EARTH

THE TALLEST MAN ON EARTH **HOMETOWN:** Leksand, Sweden **ALBUM:** *Shallow Grave*
BAND MEMBER: Kristian Matsson **FOR FANS OF:** Neutral Milk Hotel, Bonnie 'Prince' Billy, early Dylan

MUSICIAN

MEIKO QUITS HER DAY JOB

When Los Angeles-based singer/songwriter Meiko landed two songs on *Grey's Anatomy* last year, her hometown of Roberta, Ga., responded with a congratulatory billboard in the middle of town. She had left years earlier, following her older sister to L.A. without knowing exactly what she'd do once she got there. Growing up, Meiko wrote songs and played guitar in her room after school, but stage fright kept her from sharing her music.



"When I was little, I'd do talent shows in my hometown," she says. "I was so scared and embarrassed. I'd stare at the microphone and sing Whitney Houston songs and move my feet around all weird."

After three years in L.A., she summoned the courage to start playing open-mic nights. When she finally got a gig at Hollywood's Hotel Cafe, it was in front of three people. But she began working at the club as a waitress and offering to play any slot co-owner Marco Shafer would give her. Seeing club regulars like Sara Bareilles, Joshua Radin and Cary Brothers playing music for a living inspired her to give it a go.

Eventually, record labels came courting, and Meiko—whose stage name is a nod to her one-quarter Japanese heritage—signed with MySpace's new music label. This fall, she'll join the Hotel Cafe's latest tour with Rachael Yamagata, Ingrid Michaelson, Thao Nguyen and several others on her longest road stretch yet.

She still gets back home to Roberta fairly often—for "fresh air, fresh water, nice people, good food." Soon, the town may need to free up some more billboards—Meiko recently reached four million streams of her songs on MySpace, and just made her TV debut on *Conan O'Brien*. It's been a year since she's had to wait tables, but she'll still fill in when needed. "It's kind of nice to go back in and have some kind of normalcy, and wash glasses and be in that customer-service mindset," she says. "But it's definitely a better job to play music around America." **JOSH JACKSON**

MEIKO **HOMETOWN:** Roberta, Ga. **ALBUM:** *Meiko*
FOR FANS OF: Brandi Carlile, Shawn Colvin, Dido

Meiko photo by Megan Baker. Tallest Man photo by Caen Vesterlund

Millard Fillmore ★ JASON SCHWARTZMAN
The goofy name alone might be enough to persuade Schwartzman to take the role, never mind the chance to play a character who looks like he was created by Wes Anderson's great grandfather.

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FILMMAKER

WORTH THE WALK

DIRECTOR DOCUMENTS FIVE AFRICAN WOMEN'S JOURNEY TO HOSPITAL

A severe condition in which a hole develops between a woman's rectum or bladder and her vagina, *obstetric fistula* results from obstructed labor and leads to chronic incontinence and sometimes nerve damage and infertility. This occurs predominantly in developing countries, due to insufficient obstetric care, and it affects at least two million women worldwide. Sufferers are often ostracized by their villages and even their own families. Mary Olive Smith's first feature-length documentary, *A Walk to Beautiful*, chronicles five young African women as they travel to Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, seeking free treatment for their debilitating condition.

Smith scouted, produced, directed and served as one of five cinematographers on this project. Her team shot the film mainly over four months, during which the largely female crew towed equipment long distances in baking temperatures. Finding subjects was difficult, too. "There's a lot of shame associated with this condition," Smith says. "Word of mouth ultimately led us to the women we followed."

Smith says her biggest challenge was balancing the women's tender stories with the necessary medical context: "The more information we included, the more the women's stories risked being diluted. [But] I was determined not to let the audience leave without understanding the complexity of this condition."

The International Documentary Association gave *A Walk To Beautiful* its top Feature Documentary Award in 2007, and *Walk* received limited theatrical release this year. Now available on DVD—and eligible for a 2008 Oscar—the film continues to screen at universities, churches and other venues. But most importantly, it has spurred donations to the Fistula Hospital and helped push a bill through Congress to assist with maternal child health globally. "I felt great responsibility for these women and their health," Smith says. "They trusted me with their stories. They called me 'mother.'" **JULIE JACOBS**

MARY OLIVE SMITH **HOMETOWN:** Winston-Salem, N.C.
FILM: *A Walk to Beautiful* **FOR FANS OF:** *Born into Brothels, The Business of Being Born*

James Buchanan ★ ROB SCHNEIDER
Buchanan is always a popular pick for worst president ever. Thus, he shall be portrayed by the worst actor ever.

MUSICIANS

HIGH PLACES: ETCHED IN YOUR MEMORY

Seventy years ago, a rakish gentleman's come-on would've been to invite a lady up to 'see his etchings.' Today, fine-art major Robert Barber isn't getting fresh when he utters the same phrase—he really has them. And he's become so familiar with the bygone acid-engraving art that he wound up teaching a college course on it. "Etching, in the '30s, was one of the main ways people met and produced art," he explains. "And a lot of etchings from back then were pretty dramatic—like Otto Dix's, whose stuff was all war imagery with people in gas masks crawling through trenches. And me being a weird punk-rock/art-school kid, I was always focusing on the dark stuff."

Naturally, the first single from High Places—the percussive duo Barber formed with vocalist/bassoon student Mary Pearson—featured one of his works on the cover (recently replicated on the *03/07-09/07* anthology). The two became roommates after meeting through a mutual band-roadie friend. It was the perfect artistic match: Barber loved laborious processes like etching and lithography, while the orchestra-aimed Pearson usually practiced six hours a day. "I think we both embraced our nerdiness," Pearson says. "And one thing we knew we didn't want to do was use typical band instrumentation, so we use accidental things when we're recording. I was sniffling while scratching the head of a banjo one time, and we used that as a really loud element." That track, "Namer," also relies on Pearson's birdlike trill, clackety wood blocks and jazz-guitar filigrees; "A Field Guide" boasts a slapped plastic bag for snare; and "The Storm" uses hand-shaken spare change for rhythm. The end results are oddly warm, almost tropical.

"But it's not like we're Blue Man Group or anything," adds Barber, who's constantly searching for new ways to warp guitar notes. "We don't use a ton of effects, but we're huge fans of delay."

So has Barber taught his chum to etch? Yes, Pearson says. "And I felt like I was getting to take his class for free. But I haven't given him a bassoon lesson yet."

"She hasn't even let me touch it!" Barber snorts. "That bassoon's worth more than everything we own!" **TOM LANHAM**

HIGH PLACES HOMETOWN: Brooklyn, N.Y. **ALBUM TITLE:** *High Places* **BAND MEMBERS:** Robert Barber (multi-instrumentalist) and Mary Pearson (vocals, bassoon) **FOR FANS OF:** Cocteau Twins, Thrill Jockey Records, etchings.

Photo by Hisham Bharoocha

THE SUBLIME YEARS

BY JOHN H. RICHARDSON ILLUSTRATION BY DONGYUN LEE

Julia left last week—got in her little Honda, backed out and drove away. West to California. With her long brown hair streaming and her boyfriend riding shotgun. My oldest daughter, gone.

Afterward, I went into her room. It felt empty at first and then I realized it was actually full to the brim with her absence. She'd painted this ochre wash on the walls and pinned those Indian bedspreads to the ceiling, picked out these red-velvet curtains and glued the Jimi Hendrix postage stamps above the closet and put the "radioactive" sign on the door. Then she used a magic marker to write lyrics on the walls:

Laughter, it's free. Anytime,
just call me.
439 0116, when you're down
with Sublime you get
funky fresh lyrics ...

She got that first Sublime CD for her ninth birthday. It was a gift from her uncle Steve, a tattooed downtown punk. She unwrapped it and passed it around, and I remember looking at the drunk naked clown on the inside cover and thinking, great Steve, totally appropriate choice for a nine-year-old. Even better than the Minutemen CD you bought for her last birthday.

But that was the year Alanis Morissette broke through with *Jagged Little Pill*, so Julia put Sublime on hold. She listened to Morissette nonstop. And one day I realized she was singing the songs *exactly*, not just when she was singing along, but also with the stereo off. The exact pitch, the exact rhythm. So I told her she might want to try playing along on the guitar and showed her the chords to "Hand In My Pocket."

An hour later, I came back into the room and she was playing the song—not stumbling through it, *playing* it.

Soon she was performing at all the family parties. It was a little freaky, this 10-year-old with a smoky voice and perfect rhythm, churning away with such adult focus. Then I took her to an open-mic night and she got a standing ovation. After that, she recorded eight songs by Lucinda Williams on her uncle's eight-track and we sent them to Lucinda through a friend. The next time Lucinda performed in our area, she invited us backstage and called everyone over. "This is the little girl who sang my songs!"

Then Julia discovered that old Sublime CD and painted her room and pinned up those bedspreads. Every hour of the day and night, you could stand outside the door and hear those punky ska rhythms and Brad Nowell's supple voice. Sublime became the soundtrack to our lives. I bought her *40oz. to Freedom* and all the bootlegs, trying not to worry too much about the message she was getting from songs like "Smoke Two Joints" or "Caress Me Down." She even sang with her daddy's band a few times, usually "Santeria" or "Doin' Time." And one night she sat at the foot of my bed and played me a private Sublime concert, one of the happiest moments of my life.

Eventually, she moved on to Jeff Buckley and Fiona Apple and all the other music in the world. There was only a touch of reggae in the CD she recorded at 16, *Melt The Blue*. But Sublime had marked her forever. I asked her why when she called from the road, somewhere in Oklahoma. (After three years of straight As in the science department of a major university, Julia dropped out to see if she could make it as a musician, playing with her band The Big Bang.) She talked about Sublime's carefree party vibe and Brad's sexy voice and especially the way they mixed everything together—punk and rock and reggae and ska and even the Grateful Dead. "I loved the music you and Mom played," she said. "But Sublime was the first thing I heard by kids who were closer to my age, who were living in my world and not just yours."

Sublime gave her the news she needed to hear: that you could mix up all your influences and come out with yourself. "It allowed me to be free," she said.

And now she is.

➥JOHN H. RICHARDSON IS A WRITER-AT-LARGE FOR *ESQUIRE*. LISTEN TO CLIPS FROM HIS DAUGHTER JULIA'S MUSIC AT PASTEMAGAZINE.COM/NOVEMBER08

Abraham Lincoln ★ MICHAEL RICHARDS
The hair! The nose! Plus, his career also met its demise in a crowded theater.

LIFE, THE UNIVERSE AND EVERYTHING

SPORE WALKS A TIGHTROPE BETWEEN CREATIONISM AND EVOLUTION

BY GUS MASTRAPA

Will Wright makes God games—simulations that give players the power to create the world in their own image. *SimCity* cast us as urban planners, providing the tools to build, manage and gleefully raze sprawling metropolises. *The Sims* let us pull the strings in a virtual dollhouse, acting out the complexities of human interactions from a comfortable distance. Now Wright has his eyes on the whole enchilada. "The point of *Spore*," he says, is "to step back five steps from life and the universe and the world and get a very vast perspective on the complete history and possible future of life." From the primordial ooze to the vast reaches of space, *Spore* lets players micromanage a species for eons. And, in doing so, it flirts with divisive questions about the origins of life.

A trailer for *Spore* seems to back the idea that the universe is continually tweaked by the divine. "Behold the galaxy," the narrator intones, "full of stars and light and intelligence." Over images that look like they came straight from Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*, the clip riffs on the opening lines of *Genesis*. "Not long ago it was cold and dark. So what happened? Someone made a decision." But Wright, a self-avowed atheist, comes down squarely on the side of Darwin. "It's funny because in the game you're in the role of an intelligent designer," he says. "Yet the meta-message of the game is that life becomes what it is through the process of evolution."

Such a position seems risky at a time when the national debate continues to rage, with fundamentalists pushing schools to teach Creationism while atheist firebrands like Richard Dawkins call belief in the divine a mere delusion. Wright thinks *Spore* can provide a fruitful middle ground for both camps. "I think we can accomplish this in a way that feels like its catalytic," he says, "rather than try to stir up trouble." The discussion has already begun on web forums dedicated to *Spore*. Even before the game's release, it inspired healthy, mostly polite debate.

"Pretty much the only people who seem offended at this point are the really hardcore atheists," Wright suggests, "because they don't like the idea of religion in the game at all." Organized religion plays a role in the game's civilization phase, when your pet species attempts to conquer the hearts and minds of neighbors. "We had a lot of religious people on our team, in fact. And there were a couple of spots in the game where they sort of felt uncomfortable about things we were doing. We had a meeting, had them air their concerns and then we tried to design around that. It wasn't our intention to offend anybody. But at the same time, we wanted to present [that] what we saw—in a playful, fun way—was a roughly scientific view of the universe and life."

"We did have prototypes where creatures were evolving out of your control. You were picking from a selected set of mutations. And it was so much less engaging than if you'd actually gone and designed the creature itself."

Wright isn't totally dismissive of faith. "A lot of the top scientists that I respect consider themselves religious." And, in the end, he's not interested in force-feeding his personal beliefs to players. He considers *Spore* "primarily entertainment." Besides, he would rather inspire. "I see the value of these things much more in the realm of motivation than education," he offers. His hope is to use games like *Spore* to encourage interest in "different fields whether they're science fields, cultural, engineering or whatever." And he doesn't consider *Spore*'s omnipotent perspective to be at odds with his beliefs. Because, for Wright, player involvement comes first. "We did have prototypes," he admits, "where creatures were evolving out of your control. You were picking from a selected set of mutations. And it was so much less engaging than if you'd actually gone and designed the creature itself."

And that's how a dyed-in-the-wool atheist came to allow the hand of God to play a part in the origins of life.

➥ GUS MASTRAPA IS A FREELANCE GAMING CRITIC FOR *THE ONION A.V. CLUB*, CRISPYGAMER.COM, GAMESPY AND OTHERS. HE OWNS FOUR HIGHLY EVOLVED CREATURES, ALL OF THEM CATS.

Andrew Johnson ★ SAM WATERSTON
As *Law & Order*'s ruthless, bushy-eyebrowed D.A. Jack McCoy, Waterston knows his way around a courtroom—as Johnson surely did after being impeached.

THE INFORMER

PASTE'S GUIDE TO THE MONTH IN CULTURE

11/1 Singer, songwriter and cellist Ben Sollee kicks off his U.S. tour in Louisville, Ky., behind new album *Learning to Bend.*

NOVEMBER

1

2

11/2 *Brotherhood* season premiere on Showtime.

3

11/3 The Decemberists perform "Valerie Plame" on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien.*

4

11/4 **Election Day: vote!** On the way home, pick up Chris Cornell's Timbaland-produced *Scream*; new albums from Dido, Fall Out Boy, Gringo Star, Brad Paisley and Mavis Staples; and the "Ultimate Collector's Edition" of *A Christmas Story.*

7

11/7 Xbox 360's *Gears of War 2* promises to be even bigger and better than the original. Also: *Soul Men,* starring Samuel L. Jackson—and late greats Isaac Hayes and Bernie Mac—hits theaters.

11/11 New book *The Pitchfork 500: Our Guide to the Greatest Songs from Punk to the Present,* and Author Toni Morrison's new slave-trade tragedy *A Mercy.* **Also:** Merle Haggard's *Legendary Performances, The Cosby Show: 25th Anniversary Commemorative Edition* and *The Complete Sopranos* arrive on DVD.

11

14

16

18

11/18 *Underworld,* the latest *Tomb Raider* video game released. **Also:** *Wall-E on DVD* and a new album from Beyoncé.

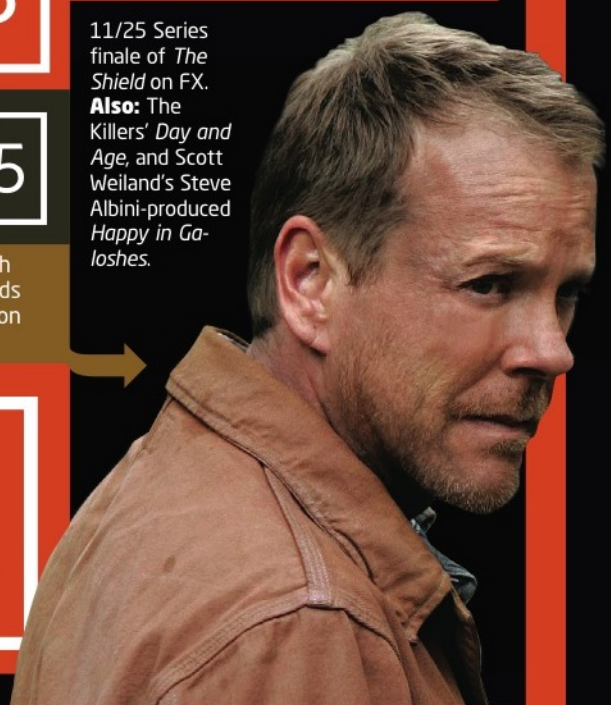
11/14 Director John Hillcoat's adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* (starring Viggo Mortensen, Charlize Theron and Guy Pearce) opens. **Also:** Cannes favorite, *A Christmas Tale,* arrives in U.S. theaters.

23

25

11/23 Feature length episode *24: Exile* leads Jack Bauer into Season 7 (Fox).

11/25 Series finale of *The Shield* on FX. **Also:** The Killers' *Day and Age,* and Scott Weiland's Steve Albini-produced *Happy in Galoshes.*



11/16 International Caribbean Music Festival opens in Miami.

26

11/26 Director Gus Van Sant's latest, *Milk,* starring Sean Penn, Josh Brolin and Emile Hirsch.

ONLINE For an expanded, day-by-day list of album, film, game, DVD and book releases, TV events, concerts, festivals and more, visit ***pastemagazine.com/theinformer.***